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Eradication of poverty and other development issues

Social development: United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all

Advancement of women

Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Letter dated 24 August 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

On 29 June 2010, the Government of Brazil, the Government of the Russian Federation, the World Bank and the World Food Programme held a forum, on the margins of the substantive session of 2010 of the Economic and Social Council, at United Nations Headquarters in New York, entitled "Feed Minds, Change Lives: School Feeding, the Millennium Development Goals and Girls' Empowerment". I have the honour to enclose the summary report of the conclusions it reached (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the text of the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 24, 27 (d), 28 and 64.

(*Signed*) Maria Luiza Ribeiro **Viotti**
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Annex to the letter dated 24 August 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Summary report of the School Feeding Forum: Feed Minds, Change Lives: School Feeding, the Millennium Development Goals and Girls' Empowerment

29 June 2010

On the occasion of the 2010 session of the Economic and Social Council, a forum entitled "Feed Minds, Change Lives: School Feeding, the Millennium Development Goals and Girls' Empowerment" was co-sponsored by the Governments of Brazil and the Russian Federation, the World Bank and the World Food Programme (WFP), as part of global advocacy efforts to foster greater awareness of the importance and value of school feeding. The forum provided a platform for the discussion of school feeding as an effective form of social protection for targeting hunger and undernutrition, an investment in long-term development and stability, an instrument in support of gender equality and a contribution towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Forum took the form of a two-hour panel discussion and presented an opportunity for the sharing of experiences by experts in the field and the presentation of practical country examples by national authorities from various regions. Finally, the forum also provided an opportunity to highlight challenges and best practices with the objective of re-energizing the dialogues on school feeding in preparation for the outcome document, currently under negotiation, of the Summit on the Millennium Development Goals to be held in September 2010.

The panel event was chaired by H.E. Mrs. Moushira Mahmoud Khattab, Minister of State for Family and Population, Government of Egypt. The panel of experts included: Dr. Albaneide Peixinho, National School Feeding Coordinator-General, Ministry of Education, Government of Brazil; Mr. Valdimir Chernikov, Deputy Director of the Department of Administrative Work and Exterior Relations of the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of the Russian Federation; Mrs. Margaret Ndanyi, Head of School, Health and Nutrition at the Ministry of Education, Government of Kenya; Mrs. Evelyn Pérard, Coordinator of the National School Feeding Programme, Government of Haiti; Mrs. Nancy Walters, Chief of School Feeding Policy, World Food Programme; and Mr. Don Bundy, Lead Specialist on School Health, Nutrition and HIV/AIDS and Education, World Bank. The event was facilitated by Mr. Phil Hay (Communications Adviser, Human Development Network, World Bank).

Panellist remarks

- **Egypt**: Investing in children is of utmost importance. Child poverty is different from adult poverty, this is important to consider when deciding how best to address the challenges of poverty. School feeding is not merely about delivering food to children to keep them healthy; it is about the inherent right of every child to life and survival, the right to be protected from child labour and child marriage, as enshrined in articles 6 and 27 of the Convention on the

Rights of the Child. School feeding is also instrumental to ensure the right to education and a decent standard of living.

- **Brazil**: The speaker from Brazil representing the Ministry of Education shared the Brazilian school feeding experience, which has become an integral part of Brazil's growth strategy and fight against hunger. The school feeding programme, reaching 47 million children, has become a wide success not only in their country but as a model for many countries in the world. Today in Brazil, all students are legally entitled to a school meal. Food is not only used for nourishment, but as part of an "educational process"; the programme accompanies feeding with a holistic education. The school feeding programme is intrinsically and legally linked with support to local agricultural production and the social rights of vulnerable groups. Brazil is partnering with WFP and has been actively engaged in South-South cooperation through technical support to school feeding programmes in countries in Africa and Latin America.

- **Russian Federation**: The speaker from the Russian Federation also shared his country's experience with school feeding, within the current market model of post-socialist economics. Today, under President Medvedev (who revived the school feeding programme) the doctrine of food security leads Russian efforts to provide fortified meals to schoolchildren. He emphasized that the private sector and civil society are an important partner of the Government in managing the feeding programmes on-site. Children are 20 per cent of the population but 100 per cent of the future.

- **Haiti**: The national school feeding programme in Haiti was ongoing before the recent earthquake in January and, despite the many challenges, was immediately restarted with initially some 40,000 meals a day provided to schoolchildren. The programme continued to be scaled up as part of recovery efforts and now reaches almost 1 million children. The programme targets not only the children, but also the parents and the communities. The speaker highlighted the need to improve the legal framework, local procurement, national capacities, to work through State institutions, flexible funding arrangements and timely disbursement of funds from donors and good partners as key elements of a sustainable national school feeding programme. Currently, about 250,000 have benefited from the school feeding programme from the Haitian national budget, together with assistance from WFP (800,000 children targeted), the World Bank (50,000) and USAID (45,000); the number of children fed by the programme is now 1 million. The long-term objective is to reach all of the school-aged children in the country, 2.2 million approximately. The Government of Haiti is currently developing a national school feeding strategy and requesting support from partners to expand the coverage and the quality of school feeding in the country, which includes increasing the amount of food bought locally for the programme.

- **Kenya**: The primary focus of Kenya's school feeding programme is to make sure that the Kenyan child is fed, especially those living in the rural areas. There are different school-feeding models supported by the Ministry of Education and WFP in Kenya depending on the food-security contexts of the area. Additional objectives of the programme are improved potential for local purchase, an increased attention to girl's education and an improved quality of

education. School-feeding beneficiaries in Kenya total more than 1.9 million children, most of whom are girls. The programme also supports local farmers by using home-grown food products. However, since the onset of implementation, the programme has not been without cultural challenges, especially since girls are still kept at home and are forced to marry early. There is still progress to be made in changing this cultural behaviour. No child should go to school hungry. By working together, we can make a difference.

- **World Bank**: There is considerable demand for school feeding programmes, especially after the recent food and economic crises. School feeding functions as a social safety net mechanism (for example through conditional cash transfers), which benefits the worst-off children; however, school feeding is least commonly implemented where it is needed most, although many low-income countries are striving to develop these programmes. School feeding was initially perceived as an expensive intervention, but that view has now changed. A joint study by WFP and the World Bank called *Re-thinking School Feeding* showed that school feeding is effective when well targeted to the needy, with strong national ownership and the use of local production. Empirical evidence indicates that when combined with local purchase school feeding has the potential to have multiplier effects in terms of educational outcomes, gender equality outcomes, and agricultural development. It can be nutritionally beneficial, especially when linked to other health interventions such as deworming. The use of school feeding programmes has also been shown to increase the children's ability to learn, so the benefits are long term. Although school feeding programmes can indeed appear to be expensive, they can be managed properly to minimize costs and maximize benefits. The World Bank and WFP are currently working together in 10 countries to support national Governments in developing and implementing sustainable school feeding programmes.

- **World Food Programme**: School feeding has been proven to be a good investment, with multiple impacts and benefits related to better health, increased learning capacity and increased opportunities for children, especially for girls. WFP school feeding programmes have reached about 22 million children since they first started and are now implemented in 68 countries. WFP has a new policy and approach to school feeding, supporting home-grown and home-owned programmes, which has long-term sustainability. It is possible to overcome the major challenge of funding if multiple sources of funding are tapped from education, agriculture, health, and social protection. WFP is optimistic, with the increasing prominence school feeding is gaining in different forums, including the recent G-20 and G-8 summits and Education for All meetings, and highlighted the need for continued advocacy for school feeding and its role in ending hunger and the attainment of Education for All.

- **Egypt**: The Egyptian school feeding programme has been ongoing since 1951. A total of 12 million girls have benefited from a fortified date bar and a take-home ration. Under the Girls Education Initiative, the focus is on girls because of the critical importance of investing in girls in a society that traditionally has not done so in the past. Other programmes combat child labour by getting children off the streets. School feeding attracts the most vulnerable and ensures that the family lets them stay in school. The health and cognitive abilities of the children in these programmes has improved. School feeding

programmes are implemented in partnership with 16 ministries in the country, with WFP joining in 2004.

The Forum was well attended, with approximately 100 participants from the United Nations, permanent missions of Member States and civil society. Interventions were raised from the floor by the following Member States: United Republic of Tanzania, Nigeria, Armenia, Brazil, Haiti, Russian Federation and Saudi Arabia, as well as international institutions (including UNICEF and United Nations-affiliated funds and programmes), non-governmental organizations (the Haitian Diaspora Federation and a non-governmental organization from India) and from the private sector; remarks are summarized below:

UNICEF noted the importance of not viewing school feeding as a stand-alone intervention, but rather as part of a holistic life cycle approach and complementary to early child development and a contribution to improved nutrition. UNICEF stressed that school feeding can help where attention is paid to the right quality of food, in terms of micronutrient foods, and improves maternal health through education which helps benefit children.

The Secretary of State for Animal Production, Government of Haiti, touched on the importance of ensuring local purchase of food to combat food insecurity and support agricultural development. School feeding is seen as a main pillar of the Haitian food security programme and the reconstruction plan.

Saudi Arabia underlined the need to share best practices associated with the funding and implementation of school feeding.

The United Republic of Tanzania noted that school feeding is widely used in both developed and developing countries and should not be regarded as the exclusive purview of poor countries. He highlighted his Government's commitment to scale up the country's highly successful national school feeding programme and the importance of international assistance including WFP support.

The Haitian Diaspora Federation expressed support for the WFP school feeding programmes in Haiti and called for international cooperation with the Government of Haiti to help feed all the children of Haiti through a national school feeding programme targeting all school-age children and purchasing food from local producers, in order to foster local development. The Diaspora Federation also pushed for the importance of the school meals to be nutritious but at the same time adapted to local food culture.

Nigeria raised the importance of addressing critical issues of sustainability and the costs encountered by Government. She also spoke of the benefits derived from school feeding programmes.

A representative of a foundation working in India sought information on the scope for greater cooperation with partners and accountability measures for Governments implementing school feeding programming.

Armenia noted the unifying role of school feeding in the areas of development and education and the useful experience of the Russian Federation in its cooperation with Armenia.

Closing remarks

The Chairwoman noted that school feeding is a productive social protection instrument with multiple impacts contributing to Millennium Development Goals 1 to 5.

She noted that school feeding programmes are a development "best buy" during a time of shrinking aid volumes, when donors are looking for cost-effective interventions that crowd in a multiplicity of positive outcomes. For example, school feeding programmes are notable for their ability to feed hungry children, increase their cognitive ability to learn, heighten attendance (particularly by female students), as well as jump-start rural development and increase incomes for farmers (the majority of whom are women in Africa) through the use of local procurement modalities.

The Chairwoman closed the meeting by emphasizing the importance of a sustained partnership including South-South cooperation to reinforce national efforts in the area of school feeding and confirmed school feeding as a legitimate intervention that should be adequately reflected in the outcome document of the Summit on the Millennium Development Goals of September 2010.